Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development

Centre canadien
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de la politique étrangère

REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON GOVERNANCE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE AMERICAS

CCFPD

January 28, 2000 (Victoria, British Columbia)

8007.3E

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Organized by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, on January 28, 2000, academics, community and church leaders, federal government officials, parliamentarians, leaders of NGO initiatives and specialists in local and international governance met for a day in Victoria to discuss "Governance, Civil Society and the Americas." The discussion is one in a series of roundtables helping to shape Canada's interests in the hemisphere by identifying opening initiatives for Canada in preparation of the Windsor Foreign Ministers' Meeting, June 2000, and leading to the Summit of the Americas in April, 2001. This seminar focussed on issues of political systems, corruption and threats to democracy.

1. Introduction

As the world underwent changes in the late 1980's, Canada joined the OAS in 1990, attended the Miami Summit in 1994, and became encouraged by more liberalized economic policies and commitments to democracy within the OAS states. The second Summit (Santiago-1998) witnessed commitments to a Plan of Action which included conventions on corruption, small arms, gender equality and indigenous issues. Recent new opportunities such as the Pan American Games, Spouses of Heads of States meetings, the Business Forum and an upcoming model assembly (Alberta) for youth are indicators of additional progress. There remain, however, real problems - waning economic growth, serious inequalities, democracies remain fragile. There is a need to strengthen societies by reducing inequalities and building democratic processes and institutions, introducing a more integrated economic approach within the hemisphere and bringing the living human dimension closer to the expert agendas. These were some of the challenges facing the Victoria seminar participants as they identified options for Canadian policy-makers to pursue in the next months leading to Windsor and the Quebec Summit in 2001.

2. Cross Cutting Issues

During the course of the day certain cross cutting issues surfaced in the discussions - issues that are integral to both the formal summit processes and the informal processes being pursued by parliamentarians, civil society groups and others. Certain questions arose:

What are Canada's interests in democracy, the environment, and corruption?

- Which networks and processes should Canada support in order to build capacity of civil society and build state-to-state civil society relations?
- How can we strengthen information exchange in the hemisphere?
- How can space be created for more effective and inclusive participation?
- What role can Canada play in institutional development and how can institutions help monitor and review this capacity development?
- What lessons learned and what Canadian models could be shared and exported?
- How can models be activated and created which will be useful?

3. Context and Definitions

As the group explored these questions, it was noted that many societies within the hemisphere have civil societies in place and long histories, some 200 years old, of communities working together on certain issues. Across the hemisphere there is great variety within institutions whether they be the church or the military. In some countries the military has gone from killing its citizens to protecting the environment and in Guatemala the military owns a bank. Some time was spent on defining civil society and the concept of human security. The group recognized definitions of civil society, human security, non-governmental organization mean different things to different societies throughout the hemisphere. We should be careful in how we define these terms. The wrong people - ie. the mafia and the drug trade - can be seen as part of civil society. Being sensitive to the historic role of the church, cultural traditions, NGOs and institutions, the complexities of definitions, and remaining conscious that those in the region look differently at these issues than through a western lens were important reminders.

4. Political Systems

In order to introduce the discussion on governance and political systems, Nancy Taylor, Parliamentary Centre in Ottawa, began by defining the concept of human security and clarifying that the fulfilment of human security goals depends in large measure on the ability of governing systems to manage a state's affairs. Democratic governing systems were defined to include legislatures, legal and judicial systems, electoral and human rights bodies, regional and local governments, the private sector and civil society organizations. There are many actors in a governing system - the state playing a prominent role in how it maintains social harmony, security and order. The state's obligations include ensuring social, political and economic

inclusion and properly functioning elected bodies, legal and judicial systems and public services. Increasingly, governing systems are involving the private sector and civil society organizations. Nancy stated societies in the hemisphere faced two main challenges - firstly, the ability to guide and articulate democratic development visions with broad-based support for its consolidation and secondly, the ability to formulate and implement public policy in a collaborative and constructive environment. The group was posed with the question as to whether institution-building efforts should involve working with civil society groups in democratic development and what role should Canada play?

5. Corruption

Matt Dippell, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Washington, began framing the discussion on corruption by defining corruption as an abuse of entrusted power for personal gain and identifying some lessons learned in the fight against corruption. He outlined an integrated approach put forward by the World Bank which includes the public sector establishing ethical codes, the need for strong civil society groups, an accountable judiciary, a free media, a private sector with strong ethical standards, and international cooperation in fighting corruption. He recommended strengthening political parties, identifying the sources of campaign funds, supporting civic education to include ethics education and educating the military to take on more productive roles in societies. Matt Dippell signalled the group to identify any Canadian pieces or existing niches within the World Bank list that Canada could pursue in preparation of the OAS Summit.

6. Threats to Democracy

Professor Pat Marchak, University of British Columbia, introduced this topic by emphasizing how essential the protection of the judiciary and legal systems and the capacity of international organizations to protect the rule of law were in assisting struggling democratic societies. Professor Marchak clarified that globalization had more to do with investment than free trade and that the unequal distribution of income and wealth were major threats to democratic development in the hemisphere. She explained the importance of understanding the limitations on the freedom of capital, the quiet war on intellectuals and union leaders in struggling democracies and how vital it was to build in protections for labour, culture and the environment. Recognizing the impact that the media has on shaping opinions about political leaders and political parties is significant, improving the role of the media and supporting political parties becoming more viable were seen as essential to developing democracies.

7. What can Canada Do - Where can Canada have Influence?

Recognizing Canada does not have all the answers and being mindful not to commit Canada

beyond that which Canadians are prepared to support, Canada does have expertise to offer in its role in the Summit. Canada has strong skills in process and experience with capacity-building and the mechanisms of participation, inclusion, access and dialogue with youth, children, indigenous peoples and others. Canada could export this expertise in participation and dialogue, parliamentary processes and invest in capacity building of institutions and people. Examples identified include the following:

1. Economic Integration:

As economic forces are driving the agenda to a large degree, Canada could support stronger economic integration within the OAS. This complex topic needs to be explored in much more depth than a one day seminar (with numerous topics) could give attention to at this time. Some work has been done on codes of conduct for business but some questioned whether there is enough to export or share at this time.

2. Canadian Models for Export:

Canada has successful models of consultation and dialogue to share - models of process which create space for people to come together and think and understand. Canada has models of consulting the Canadian public to gain more diverse and deeper perspectives, strategies of consulting and working with other countries, and working in coalition on certain complex issues (ie. landmines). There are Canadian models of how to deal with conflict in discussions.

3. Managing Diversity:

Canada could share experiences of managing diversity in a pluralistic society with others. This includes indigenous peoples.

4. Institutional Development within the OAS:

It was suggested Canada should encourage peer review within the OAS and identify how institutions can help monitor and review. Communication infrastructures could be used in implementation and monitoring. Canada could contribute to peer review by helping to carefully rethink the roles and restructuring of roles of the military within OAS countries.

5. A Concrete Example of an Inter-governmental Initiative is:

The Inter-Defence Board offers a good opportunity for participation of the Canadian military in the military culture of OAS countries. As a mechanism in the permanent platform, the Board could be a forum to discuss security-building, transparency, accountability, peace-building in curbing corruption within the military. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre may have a role as an operational and low political level mechanism from Canada.

6. Capacity Building and Networks:

Canada should be identifying ways to create space for dialogue around values and capacity building. Strengthening democratic parliamentary associations such as the Speakers Network and the Network of the Americas and supporting transnational networks such as judges associations in the quest to ensure the rule of law would strengthen governing systems. Supporting public

education to improve critical thinking and problem solving and supporting short and long term development projects which support these initiatives was seen as necessary- projects which helped children - early childhood education, war-affected children, the rights of children.

7. Information Technology:

New technologies should be utilized to break down barriers and be used as an inter-face between inter-states and civil society groups to civil society groups. The need to support independent media and understanding the strong impact of media on cultures of the hemisphere is important. Also, the role of NGOs in scrutiny and monitoring is growing in the use of new technologies.

8. Civil Society:

Political parties and governments come and go but civil society is enduring. Canada could lead in ways of how to strengthen the bridges between the grass roots and government and ways of opening up space for public participation in policy development. Canada could share best practices in working across the state and civil society divide ie. Mexico. Other aspects included strengthening community groups linkages and supporting stronger political parties (the inter-face between the public and government) to strengthen civil society dialogue and participation.

9. A Place at the Table - Consultation and Dialogue:

As many diverse ideas as possible should be at the table. Consultation should be broad and not necessarily with people one likes, not just the groups that government already knows and not just business interests. There is a growing demand for inclusiveness and the voiceless to be heard in the discussion, especially involving issues concerning the environment, children, and indigenous peoples. Diverse ideas should be at the table in the policy process.

8. Conclusion

This seminar is one piece of a process in gathering input over the year in preparation for key meetings within the OAS. Further roundtables, papers, meetings and policy discussions will be taking place. Certain issues that Canada could potentially have a role in were identified but were not developed during the seminar and require more in-depth discussion. These include: Ethics education, codes of conduct, free media, environmental degradation as a threat to democratic development, drugs, and global alternatives to economic power imbalances. Canada could, however, pursue a role in supporting stronger economic integration, institutional development and capacity-building, ways of utilizing new information technologies, finding a place at the table for civil society groups, not only business, strengthening systems of governance and sharing Canada's expertise in process and management of diversity.

125 promenade Sussex Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Governance, Civil Society and the Americas
January 28, 2000, Victoria, B.C.

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January 17, 2000

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to invite you to a roundtable on Civil Society and Governance in the Americas to be held **January 28, 2000, in Victoria, from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Ocean Pointe Hotel, 45 Songhees Road, Executive Lounge .** An informal reception will be held the 27th in the evening (7pm to 9:30pm) at the hotel.

In the context of this summer's OAS General Assembly and in preparation for the Summit of the Americas in 2001, this roundtable will provide expert advise on current issues related to Civil Society and Governance in the Americas. Topics for discussion include governing systems (parliaments, local government, how to connect with these in the region, how to strengthen them and make them more accessible), corruption (how to deal with problems associated with corruption and governing systems) and the "Threats to Democracy" (specifically in Latin America). How might these problems might be dealt with in a regional approach?

We hope to assemble experts from a number of sectors including; universities, business, NGO's, labour, government and youth. Attached you will find the agenda, background paper as well as information regarding your travel and reimbursement. We also invite you to visit the following Web sites where you will find some interesting information : www.americascanada.org/
http://www.icclr.law.ubc.ca/html/publications.htm
www.georgetown.edu/pdba/

I look forward to seeing you on the 28th of January.

Sincerely,

Steven Lee
National/Executive Director

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AGENDA

Civil Society and Governance in the Americas

January 28, 2000
Victoria
8:30am to 4:30pm
Ocean Pointe Resort

8:30 - 9:00	Coffee and Donuts (Executive Lounge)
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome, Roundtable Introduction (Steve Lee, Chair)
	Opening Comments on Civil Society and Governance in the Americas
	- Michael Brock, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
9:30 - 11:30	Part 1: **Governing Systems**
	Opening comments by Nancy Taylor
1:30 - 12:30	Lunch
12:30 - 14:15	Part 2: **Corruption**
	Opening comments by Matt Dippell
14:15 - 14:30	Break
14:30 - 16:15	Part 3: **Threats to Democracy**
	Opening comments by Pat Marchak
16:15 - 16:30	Policy Options for Canada / Conclusion

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